

Serial No. 09/402,121
Attorney Docket (2)1625/00023

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to reconsider the application as amended. Claims 1-6 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Claims 14-20 have been added by this amendment. Claims 7 and 14 are independent. Claims 7-13 are allowed.

Telephone Interview

Applicant thanks the Examiner for granting the telephone interview of January 23, 2003. During the interview, the Examiner noted that there was no structural link between the surface structures and the joint arrangements.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd Paragraph

Claims 1-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. By this amendment, claims 1-6 have been canceled, rendering this rejection moot. Claims 14-20, addressed to joint arrangements and surface structures in combination, and defining the relationship therebetween, are believed to comply with 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

Conclusion

In light of the above remarks, Applicant believes the application to be in condition for allowance.

Enclosed as Appendix I is a clean copy of the pending claims 14-20.

In the event the Examiner believes an interview might serve to advance the prosecution of this application in any way, the undersigned attorney is available at the telephone number noted below. Applicant's undersigned attorney requests a telephone

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interview before the Examiner issues a further Office Action if there is any reason the Examiner believes the application as amended should not be allowed.

No fee is believed due before the Examiner may consider this Response and Amendment. Should the Commissioner find that any fee is due before the Examiner may consider this paper, including any fee for an extension of time under 37 CFR §1.136 and 37 CFR §1.17, such extension is requested and the Commissioner is authorized to charge the fee to Deposit Account No. 03-2775.

Date: March 7, 2003

Respectfully submitted,

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Enclosure: Appendix I – clean copy of all pending claims

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APPENDIX I

7. A temporary ground covering, comprising:

a plurality of surface structures each having a substantially planar top surface of thermal insulation and a bottom surface from which support projections extend;

a joint means for removably connecting the plurality of surface structures;

said joint means forming a parallelogram frame structure with an open center that receives one support projection from each of the surface structures; and

said joint means having four locking means, projecting from and forming an essentially normal angle with a substantially planar surface of the frame structure at each corner, each for interlocking with a corresponding recess member formed in a bottom surface corner of one attached surface structure, wherein

said support projections of each support structure lift the surface structure to form a gap between the ground surface and portions of the bottom surface not having support projections extending beneath them, and

the height of each support projection corresponds essentially with the thickness of the frame structure.

8. The temporary ground covering of claim 7, wherein:

the open center of the frame structure receives a support projection from each of four surface structures attached to the joint means.

9. The temporary ground covering of claim 7, wherein:

the joint means has eight locking means, two at each corner of the frame structure, and

the two locking means at each corner of the frame structure interlock with two corresponding recess members formed in a bottom surface corner of one attached surface structure.

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10. The temporary ground covering of claim 7, wherein:
the top surface of each surface structure is essentially square shaped; and
each surface structure has a coupling means, having a male coupler or a female coupler arranged on each side edge of the surface structure with the male and female couplers formed opposite one another, for coupling the side edges of each surface structure to the side edges of other surface structures.
11. The temporary ground covering of claim 10, wherein:
each male coupler has a side projection extending from a lower portion of the side edge and each female coupler has a corresponding recess on a lower portion of the side edge for mating with the side projection of the connected male coupler.
12. The temporary ground covering of claim 10, wherein:
the male and female couplers comprise a sealing means, having counterpart surfaces formed on an upper portion of their respective side edges, for sealing the joined edges of connected surface structures, and
the counterpart surfaces form an angle that deviates from a normal line of the top surface.
13. The temporary ground covering of claim 12, wherein:
the angle the counterpart surfaces form with the normal line of the top surface is approximately 15 degrees.

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14. In combination, a plurality of joint arrangements and a plurality of surface structures, the surface structures being intended for temporarily protecting and covering a ground surface, wherein:

each surface structure comprises:

- one or more corners;
- thermal insulation having at least one thermal insulation layer;
- recesses formed at a bottom surface of the surface structure; and
- one or more platform structures projecting from the bottom surface of the surface structure, the platform structures projecting a distance greater than a wall thickness of the surface structure, and wherein

each joint arrangement comprises:

- a joint piece comprising a frame part defining one or more corners; and
- one or more projections located at the corners, wherein the recesses in the surface structure generally correspond in shape to the projections of the joint piece, wherein

one or more recesses are defined between adjacent platform structures and the frame part of the joint arrangement has an open center, and at least a portion of the frame part fits within the recesses between adjacent platform structures, the height of the recesses corresponding essentially to a thickness of the frame part.

15. The combination of claim 14, wherein the one or more platform structures comprise one or more square shaped platforms on the bottom surfaces of the surface structures, and wherein the platforms embed into the open centers of the frame parts.

16. The combination of claim 14, wherein the recesses are arranged at each corner of the surface structures.

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17. The combination of claim 14 wherein the surface structures comprise coupling means having male and female couplers located at the outer edges of the surface structures, the male couplers being arranged at opposite edges of the surface structures, and the female couplers being arranged at opposite outer edges of the surface structures.
18. The combination of claim 17, wherein the male couplers are projections located at lower edges of longitudinal outer edges of the surface structures, and the corresponding female couplers are recesses in lower edges of crosswise outer edges.
19. The combination of claim 17, wherein the male and female couplers comprise an auxiliary support/sealing assembly having counterpart surfaces located at upper edges of the outer surfaces of the surface structures at an angle (α), which deviates from vertical.
20. The combination of claim 14, wherein the thermal insulation comprises plastic, and wherein the frame parts have a square shape.

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